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ABSTRACT

During the past 20 years, several of Utah's more populous areas have developed large, immigrant, non-Mormon populations. A study examined the effects over these years of the challenges caused by such cultural diversification on Utah's previously closed educational environment. Challenges were identified specifically by examining changes in communication, conflict, and character education and behaviors during that period. Following a detailed literature review, a triangulated ethnographic study was developed. Both statewide data and data from two diversified areas and two undiversified areas were examined to allow generalizability and to identify more effectively diversity-caused changes. Government and local education data were reviewed, along with useful archival sources, and 45 interviews were conducted with both indigenous and immigrating residents. Data indicated that gang activity, juvenile crime, suicides, and homicides increased meaningfully during the diversification period. Results indicated a number of exposed areas that require further examination, such as the extent of possible test biases, language barriers, and misdirected school services. Further, shifts in communications, conflict, and morality to less politeness, greater levels of discord and defiance, and less morality suggest the importance of establishing a statewide character education program to respond to changes in diversified areas. (Contains 126 references.) (BT)

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The Impact of Cultural Diversification on Education in a Closed Culture

by

Paula Marie Dawidowicz

With ever-growing cultural diversification, the importance of understanding both the nature and impact of diversification becomes crucial for today's educators. Since diversification has already existed in many areas of the country, it has historically proven difficult to study the effect of the introduction of diversity into a closed culture. However, Utah, with its unique traditionally undiversified culture, provides such an opportunity to examine both the nature and impact of cultural diversification as it occurs. Because of the nature of Utah's indigenous population, the educational environment proves to be one of the few locations for multicultural interaction. Therefore, analyzing Utah's now-changing culture both proves enlightening in understanding both the nature and origins of cultural tensions in diversified areas and provides insight into potential experiences and difficulties in areas as yet undiversified. A brief historical perspective of Utah's environment follows.

The search for the right to practice a chosen religion began on the American continent with the Pilgrims in 1620. In 1847, Brigham Young brought members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) involved in a desperate search for such freedom into the Salt Lake Valley, and for 100 years they almost entirely monopolized what later became Utah. Living alone and isolated, LDS members merged their religious and cultural expectations, and these expectations permeated every part of their lives, including their public education systems. They included a Church-established moral instruction program conducted during the school day, a strong patriarchy that permeated all cultural aspects, strict roles and behaviors for each of the culture's members, and strong Church political lobbying activities to control state residents' exposures to both outside influences and "contaminating substances" (Anderson, 1997; Maxwell, 1968; Bytheway, 1993; Kontuly, Smith & Heaton, 1995; Benson, 1998; Hinckley, 1998; "LDS Church," 1998; "Lawmakers may," 1998).

Twenty years ago, Utah remained 95% LDS, with many areas still 100% LDS. However, during the last 20 years, several of Utah's more populous areas have developed large immigrant, non-LDS populations. Salt Lake City, for example, now has only a 50% LDS population. In addition, this diversification has included multiple racial and ethnic groups. This cultural diversification is presenting numerous adjustment challenges, including evolving social barriers and constraints to achievement and educational opportunity for immigrating population members (Gallub, 1995; "Group using," 1997; "Taylorsville wants," 1998; "Fruit Heights," 1998; "Living in," 1998; "CD-ROM touts," 1998; "Utahns think," 1998; "Seminary not," 1998; "Release-time," 1998).

Objectives or Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects over the last 20 years of the challenges caused by such cultural diversification on Utah's previously closed educational environment. These challenges were identified specifcially by examining changes in communications, conflict, and character education and behaviors during that period. These were chosen for two reasons -- because they would best reflect diversity-related adolescent behavior changes, and because they would help provide an accurate overall picture of Utah's cultural evolution.

Perspectives or Theoretical Framework

A number of factors affect individuals' behaviors, including family, peers, the education system, and the environment. Within Utah, both the unique nature and organization of the LDS Church and the introduction of diversity into the previously homogeneous school system are additional factors. Cultural diversity and individuals' resulting exposure to a variety of styles of communication, conflict, and moral behaviors and attitudes have caused changes in the homogeneous population and reactions from educational administrators. Finally, as previously homogeneous population members become familiar with alternative lifestyles, their resulting choices force additional changes in the educational system in response.

Methods, Techniques, and Modes of Inquiry

Following a detailed literature review, a triangulated ethnographic study was developed. It interpreted both cultural and social interactions and curriculum changes in the educational environment and the multiple meanings implicit in texts, conversations, and educational events. Since these changes have occurred over the past 20 years, the period examined encompassed 30 years to establish a baseline. Further, both statewide data and data from two diversified areas and two undiversified areas was examined both to allow generalizability and to more effectively identify diversity-caused changes.

Further, data gathered focused on both overall educational changes and specific communications, conflict, and character education and behavior changes. Communications, conflict, and character education were chosen because different cultures have different communications and conflict management techniques, as well as different character standards (Drury, Catan, Dennison & Brody, 1998; Hatcher et al., 1994; Kubany, Richard, Bauer & Muraoka, 1992; McFayden & Kitson, 1996; Whittaker & Bry, 1991; Niemi, 1988; Masselan, Marcus & Stunkard, 1990; O'Hair & Ropo, 1994; Hall & Whyte, 1966; Shenson & Nicholas, 1993; Alexander & Babad, 1981; Argyle, 1988; Burgoon, Butler & Woodall, 1989; Raffaelli, 1997; Merten, 1997; Ruttenberg, Zea & Sigelman, 1996; Simmons & Simmons, 1994; Pubman, 1995; Belanger, 1993; Dror, 1993; Noddings, 1994; Roebben, 1995; Nesbitt, 1993; Statman, 1993).

Data Sources or Evidence

This triangulated study drew from three specific data sources. First, it included a review of all available pertinent governmental, local educational system, and newspaper reports on both the educational environment and educational policy changes and reasons. Governmental and local sources expressed official attitudes, concerns, and perceptions of needed changes and activities that created a formal portrait of the educational environment. Corresponding newspaper reports on these events represented the view given to the state's residents, as well as some informal responses in the form of editorials and commentaries. Approximately 10 interviews with state organization representatives rounded out this information. These individuals names have been changed in the text in order to protect their anonymity.

Second, it included a review of useful archival sources, including relevant dissertations, theses, and studies, personal accounts, and other illustrative, real-life sources. This review

provided real results of the presented environment and environmental changes that, considered together, created a portrait of actual occurrences and the actual environment essential to establishing a realistic change timeline.

Third, it included 45 interviews conducted with both indigenous and immigrating residents from three specific groups -- school administrators and teachers, legislators and politically active individuals, and parents. These individuals' commentaries presented residents' perceptions and recollections of Utah's educational changes and the effect of cultural diversification on those changes.

Combined, these three sources created a complete portrayal of both existing and evolving cultural differences and social barriers and constraints to achievement and educational opportunity that have evolved. The most notable of these changes follow.

Analysis

Utah's education system has long-standing test bias, language barrier, and misdirected school services problems that have resulted in low student accomplishment rates. Evidence indicated few changes in these areas as a result of diversification (Judd, 1975; Byrone, Maldonado & Rivera, 1976; Paris, 1980; Chung, 1980; Utah State Board of Education, 1990; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1987).

However, student respect and politeness have decreased notably, both among males and females. Further, interviewees indicated a growing sensitivity among residents over topics being discussed, particularly LDS topics. In fact, with some indigenous residents felt all religious topics could be discussed but LDS topics. Others indicated that the inability to discuss God within the schools meant there was no hope for saving the current school systems. At the same time, numbers of immigrating residents often feel the LDS religion is being thrust upon them.

In addition, interviewees indicated growing tension between parents, administrators, and teachers. Both indigenous and immigrating parents felt teachers and administrators were not sensitive to their wishes. Further, both groups indicated concern over teachers' and administrators' treatment of students which, reportedly, included occurrences of abuse. This concern appears to be part of a growing trend to question those in positions of authority.

Data revealed evidence of traditional inter-race problems, including some apparently based on a misinternalization of LDS doctrines by Caucasians that allowed them to treat African Americans as inferior and less righteous individuals. This misinternalization appeared to continue with some current indigenous residents and to affect their interactions with not only African American minorities, but others as well. It also appeared to have in part fostered indigenous residents' fear of the effect of the immigration of minority members on Utah's traditional culture.

These problems have been positively addressed by Horizonte High School. This high school conducts only activities that are of interest to at least 40% of the student body. It also actively teaches both the beliefs of and respect for other cultures ("Black scouts," *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 1, 1975; Smith, 1989; Andersen, 1997; Andersen, Floisand, Martinez & Robinson, 1997; West, 1988).

The sensitivity of indigenous residents toward individuals of other cultures is exacerbated in part because other cultures and religions were neither studied nor explored by individuals within

traditional Utah. This occurred because the study of religions was considered appropriate only within the Church's seminary education program. Such exposure was traditionally limited and subjective. Some indigenous residents' resulting lack of knowledge created what appeared to be either fear or anger or both at the introduction of different cultures' and religions' influences (Andersen, 1997; Smith, 1989; Bytheway, 1993; Kontuly, Smith & Heaton, 1995; Benson, 1998; Hinckley, 1998).

Student violent crime prior to diversification appeared notably higher than might be expected in such a morality-based culture. However, data indicated that gang activity, juvenile crime, suicides, and homicides still increased meaningfully during the diversification period (Health Behavior Laboratory, 1991; Division of Youth Correction, 1988; Division of Youth Correction, 1990; Division of Youth Correction, 1991; Division of Youth Correction, 1992; Division of Youth Correction, 1993; Division of Youth Correction, 1994; Division of Youth Correction, 1995; Division of Youth Correction, 1996; Division of Youth Correction, 1997; Adams & Adams, 1996; Bureau of Economic & Business Research, 1996; Field Services Staff, 1993; Data Collection & Analysis Staff, 1994; Data Collection & Analysis Staff, 1995; Data Collection & Analysis Staff, 1996; Data Collection & Analysis Staff, 1997).

Further, increased student defiance indicated student-created behavior standards shifted negatively to students both accepting and encouraging disrespectful verbal and body language, as well as disobedience to parental and authority figures. Some adolescents have reacted so violently that they have created anti-change gangs like Straight Edge, a group violently enforcing the adherence to LDS principles (Gallub, 1997; "Group using," 1997; "Taylorsville wants," 1998; "Fruit Heights," 1998; "Living in," 1998; "Payson officials, 1998; "Private schools," 1998; "Ogden dumps," 1998; "Supporters expect," 1998; Chadwick, 1993; Top & Chadwick, 1999).

Perhaps the most notable change was that some parents felt students were prepared to create a Littleton-type incident if tensions continued. Those beliefs appeared to result from one or more of three developments -- the decline in communications, the fear of the effects of immigrants, or the misinternalization of LDS doctrine. At the same time, conflict education within the state has become continually less effective in teaching constructive methods of coping with conflict-related situations.

Adolescent morality has undergone notable changes, as well. One area of change is sexual activity. Data on the traditional culture indicates that both coitus and unwed motherhood were considered stigmas, so individuals becoming pregnant were segregated from the rest of the student population. However, during diversification there has been an increase in both the acceptability and recurrence of sexual activity. A meaningful number of adolescents perceived coitus as acceptable even among uncommitted partners. Adolescent attitudes also shifted from choosing marriage at conception to choosing, instead, abortions or unwed motherhood (Arnold, 1962; Bowles, 1963; Rowley, 1981; Utah Children, 1996; Woolhiser, 1988; Utah Center for Health Statistics, 1990; Laursen, 1966).

There was also an increase in drug usage. Although drug usage was notable prior to diversification, experimentation with drugs became more common, and the use of drugs no longer held a stigma among meaningful numbers of adolescents. This attitude appeared to be growing steadily (Marcos, 1985; Health Behavior Laboratory, 1991; Drug Division, 1992; Top & Chadwick, 1999).

Culture members also appeared to shift toward greater recognition and acceptance of gay choice. This shift, however, has bee opposed dramatically by indigenous residents, whose determination can be seen in the legislature's willingness to surrender federal funding to avoid creation of gay clubs in schools. Further, gay club proponents included prominent non-LDS clergy, which further exacerbating the friction created (Semerad, February 7, 1996; Semerad, February 3, 1996; Clark, January 17, 1996; Semerad, February 23, 1996; Autman, February 25, 1996; Barberi, February 25, 1996; Autman, March 2, 1996; "No Gay," April 12, 1996; Semerad, April 19, 1996; Semerad, May 7, 1996; Israelsen, April 30, 1996).

School delinquency rose meaningfully, as well. These increases included both substance use and vandalism that took place most notably in more populated, diversified areas, increasing the possibility these changes correlated with the diversification process. Further, there were fewer increases in violent crimes than in defamation of property and acts of defiance (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1988; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1990; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1991; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1992; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1993; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1994; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1997).

Seminary was the traditional morality education mechanism. However, student seminary attendance decreased meaningfully during diversification. Further, the behaviors of those attending seminary deteriorated, , particularly in diversified areas. Finally, many immigrant adolescents were non-LDS, and therefore ineligible to attend seminary (Christensen, 1957; Loosle, 1963; Taylor, 1964; Beagley, 1962; Scoville, 1965; Fife, 1966; Hanson, 1965; Cutler, 1966; Dunford, 1967; Winkel, 1984; Seastrand, 1996.

In diversified areas, localities have experienced limited success with both moral and communications education using the Community of Caring (CofC) Program. However, the state chose not to fund this program after federal funding ended in 1999. Therefore, these areas may be seeking either alternative funding for the CofC program or new programs for which funding already exists (C. Seidel, personal communication, April 16, 1999; D. Saunders, personal communication, April 16, 1999).

In less diversified areas, however, morality education programs appeared passive. Often they amounted to a simple statement of moral precepts on a mounted wall poster to which the class was to refer during studies. In other cases, teachers were instructed to discuss character and moral education during all activities, but no oversight or specific incorporation plan existed (T. Davidson, personal communication, August 26, 1999; A. Morrison, personal communication, August 25, 1999).

State law mandated that only abstinence and adoption could be taught within schools. Materials used in undiversified schools supported this. In order to discuss anything other than either abstinence or adoption, each student's parents had to submit signed permission slips to allow specific discussions on specific dates in specific classes agreeing to allow the discussion (C. Seidel, personal communication, April 16, 1999; D. Saunders, personal communication, April 16, 1999; T. Davidson, personal communication, August 26, 1999; A. Morrison, personal communication, August 25, 1999).

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Materials used as part of the Community of Caring program did include information on birth control methods, however. These materials were the subjects of ongoing disagreements within the community over sexual and morality education. Given this knowledge, perhaps it is not surprising that although there has been a state mandated requirement for a statewide character and sex education program for over 12 years, state residents have proven unable to agree on the parameters and substance of that education.

A number of ancillary topics arose during research. One such topic was tension caused by numerous cases of inaccurate statistical reporting, misuse of educational funds, and other reporting and activity inconsistencies. Such abuses, however, were neither questioned nor exposed until immigrating residents demanded accountability (Utah State Board of Education, 1974; Utah State Board of Education, 1996; Division of Business & Economic Development, 1987; Division of Business & Economic Development, 1990; Division of Business & Economic Development, 1995; Utah State Board of Education, 1989; Utah State Board of Education, 1983; Utah State Board of Education, 1985; Utah State Office of Education, 1986; Utah State Board of Education, 1988; Utah State Board of Education, 1989; V. Jackson, personal communication, August 9, 1999; A. Montagne, personal communication, August 9, 1999).

Another was the extent of existing cultural problems, including family tensions, family dysfunctions, and adolescent substance abuse prior to diversification. Data on that period indicated that, although Utah's culture was family-based, many of its families evidenced some dysfunctional characteristics like sexual abuse, substance abuse, neglect, and emotional abuse (Health Behavior Laboratory, 1991; Reece, 1969; Proctor, 1970; Utah Office of Planning and Budget, 1986; Instructional Services Division, 1994; Marcos, 1985; Allred, 1977).

Results/Conclusions

This study presented a number of results. A number of exposed areas require further examination. They include study of the extent of possible test biases, language barriers, and misdirected school services. Once the extent and nature of these problems are defined, special programs should be designed to allow alternative testing and oversee appropriate usage of language instruction resources.

Further, the shifts in communications, conflict, and morality to less politeness, greater levels of discord and defiance, and less morality suggest it is important to establish a statewide character education program. This education program should both respond to changes in diversified areas and prepare yet-undiversified areas for potential diversification-related challenges.

To effectively address tensions over education goals and methods, it would be useful to study in greater detail residents' perceptions of acceptable education goals and methods. One method of gaining such input would be local and statewide meetings at which all interested parties are given input.

In addition, the possible existence of abusive treatment within school systems must be closely examined. Perhaps the creation of panels including local members would prove most effective in determining the truthfulness of these allegations. Since there are indications that members of the traditional culture may not identify existing concerns, panels should include both indigenous and immigrating residents or, perhaps, even outside experts in the field.

Finally, programs to increase effective teacher and administrator communication and cooperation must be developed. After additional study into the true nature and depth of teacher-administrator-parent communications problems is completed, administrator and teacher training to improve communication and cooperation improvement would prove useful, as well.

It is important to examine further the extent of fear and anger existing between indigenous and immigrating residents. Since some of that tension appeared to stem from the misinternalization of LDS precepts, instruction by Church leaders on both the nature of fear and the acceptance of other cultures might prove useful. Further, active education on different cultures and religions within state schools might prove useful. To accomplish this, local and state input into such education programs could be helpful.

It would be equally useful to study further the nature of both indigenous and immigrant families, particularly in the area of interactions. Such study could help state and local leaders address the fear and anger developing between some members of these groups. Some of the inter-group tension related to fear over changes in adolescent behaviors. A number of indigenous families were traditionally on whole or in part dysfunctional. Given these facts, it could prove useful to develop programs to strengthen families that might ease tensions and help eliminate some change-related fears.

It would also prove useful to examine further the nature and causes student crime, delinquency, drug usage, and defiance, particularly the factors involved in students' decisions to participate. This, again, would allow better planning to address those specific causes. It appears necessary to develop some type of program to address student behaviors and attitudes, particularly in light of some residents' concern over the potential for a Littleton-type incident and the development of various area gangs. This character education appears necessary in addition to traditional seminary programs and might provide a venue for discussing cultures' differing expectations and behaviors. That discussion could promote greater acceptance of other cultures and, as a result, greater peace and possibly improved student behaviors would result.

Development of such a character education program could also address declining moral conditions within the state. Further study of moral attitudes and expectations among residents within the state could allow the program to be developed optimally. As part of that study, it would prove helpful to examine both changing attitudes and the causes of those changes, particularly sexual behavior shifts like the shift to the acceptance of gay choice. Similarly, by working toward the development of a program would allow more opportunity for the development of consensus and communication among residents.

Exploration of specific character education needs and desires by a panel of community members could prove useful. Exploration of possible funding and available programs would be essential to that process. In-depth examination of the Horizonte High School's program and how to adapt its positive and successful aspects to other schools would also prove useful. Finally, developing a plan to prepare undiversified portions of the state for the challenges of diversification and to incorporate useful programs into existing diversified schools should be explored.

At the same time, it would prove essential to conduct further research into the extent of misreporting of data and misuse of funds. Individuals in positions of power traditionally controlled all data sources and, as a result, exerted great control over the nature of education and

often of the culture itself. Further, because indigenous residents traditionally did not question the actions of people in positions of authority, to eliminate the tension resulting from immigrating residents' desires to question authority it appears necessary to develop some method of ensuring oversight of authorities' actions. Therefore, after additional research, the development of some mechanism for effective oversight that includes input from both indigenous and immigrating individuals would prove important.

Finally, two more possibilities should be studied. Evidence indicated notable problems existing within Utah's traditional culture prior to diversification, including student defiance, violence, weak families, and more, and Utah does receive the same television and movies and resulting exposure to divergent ideas through those media. Although Utah has faced an influx of diversity, there is evidence to suggest that, rather than introducing a different evolution than members within the culture might otherwise have experienced, perhaps instead immigrating members have simply sped up the timetable for development of that evolution. Further research should include examination of both the effects of diversification in other areas of the culture and possible timetables for the development of sensitivity to other ideas and cultural changes.

Finally, cultures within this country have developed such a strong sense of self worth and individuality that diversification during this time may have proven more difficult for Utahns than diversification may have been during a time when those cultural identifications were not yet developed. However, whether this cultural strength has created an evolutionary direction that would not have otherwise taken place seems unlikely. A comparison of Utah's diversification process with the processes in both previously diversified and other currently diversifying areas would prove useful.

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